

**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

**OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES**

16 December 1958


**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT:** Developments in Cuba Since Mid-November

1. The position of the Batista regime has deteriorated more rapidly than was anticipated in SNIE 85-58, "The Situation in Cuba," 24 November 1958. The rebels now dominate Oriente Province outside the city of Santiago and a few other beleaguered towns, and are increasingly active in the provinces of Camaguey, Las Villas, and Pinar del Rio. Dr. Manuel Urrutia Lleo, Fidel Castro's choice for provisional president, is now present in Oriente, apparently for the purpose of setting up a provisional government and claiming recognition of the rebel's belligerent rights. The Cuban Government's armed forces show increasing signs of demoralization. In commercial circles there is mounting apprehension that Castro may soon come to power with bloody and disastrous consequences for Cuba because of the anarchic conditions then deemed likely to prevail.

2. On 27 November considerable numbers of Cuban army officers were arrested for complicity in a military conspiracy against the

DOCUMENT NO. 33  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐  
☒ DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
22 APR 1980  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ REVIEWER: 018845



government or for cowardice in refusing to continue the fight against the Castro rebellion. The respected General Martin Diaz Tamayo has been retired for suspected involvement in this plot. General Eulogio Cantillo Porras is still in nominal command of the Santiago military district, but is under suspicion and close surveillance. It is likely that there was such a conspiracy to depose the regime and establish a military junta. Although it has been checked, it is symptomatic of the existence of dissatisfaction and disaffection within the armed forces. The possibly intended appointment of General Francisco Tabernilla to replace General Diaz Tamayo would have a further demoralizing effect upon the Cuban Army.

3. The rebel drive is endangering Cuba's hitherto prosperous economy and will probably hinder the sugar harvest, due to commence in January. At the same time, the heavy government expenditures necessary to support antirebel operations constitute a drain on the economy, and prolonged political instability is having an adverse effect on business activity.

4. To meet this situation, the Batista government has newly extended the suspension of constitutional guarantees and, in addition, has declared a state of national emergency. Plans are proceeding to inaugurate President-elect Rivero Aguero on 24 February. The latter,

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although a Batista man, has given evidence that he will at least consider some compromise to return peace to Cuba. He has stated that he does not rule out the possibility of a constitutional assembly as a means of reaching a national solution to the Cuban problem. Nevertheless, neither Rivero Aguero nor Batista have shown any sign of taking positive steps to alter the present chaotic internal situation.

5. In these circumstances, there is considerable sentiment in Cuba, especially in business circles, for the establishment of a military junta to dispose of Batista and to head off Castro. The armed forces are probably in the mood to support such a move, but, with the retirement of Diaz Tamayo and the close check kept on Cantillo Porras, it is not apparent where the requisite leadership would come from.

6. As was estimated in SNIE 85-58, a military junta would be the most effective means of breaking the existing political impasse, but would not of itself restore peace and stability, in that it would still have to cope with the 26 of July Movement. If the personnel and program of the junta were such as to inspire confidence in its intention and ability to restore democratic government, the 26 of July Movement would be deprived of its *raison d'etre* and might lose some of its momentum, although the time is growing late for that. To suppress

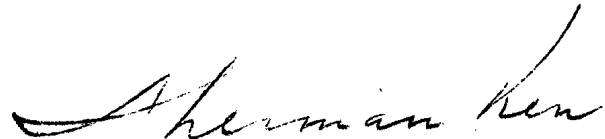
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the Castro movement by force, the junta would require, on a large scale, military aid such as has been denied to Batista, and the issue would remain for some time in doubt. To accomplish a quick pacification of Cuba, the junta would have to offer a political solution satisfactory to Fidel Castro.

7. On the other hand, should high political or military leadership fail to take some drastic action to stem the momentum of the Castro operation, such as the removal of Batista, the civil war would be likely to spread at an ever increasing rate. In this situation, the possibility cannot be excluded that the army in the field, tired of the civil war, might turn against the government, either piecemeal, by going over to the rebels, or in an organized way. In either case, the strength of Castro's political position would be enhanced.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



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